

Some Common Myths about Arthritis

"Arthritis is an old person's disease"

Although the risk for arthritis increases with age, nearly 3 out of 5 with arthritis are younger than age 65. People of all ages are affected, including children and teens. Juvenile rheumatoid arthritis is one of the most common chronic illnesses of childhood.

"Arthritis is just a normal part of aging"

If this were true, most older adults and no children would have arthritis. However, nearly half of the elderly population never experience these conditions, and an estimated 285,000 children are, indeed, affected. Furthermore, some forms of arthritis (e.g. osteoarthritis of the knee) can be prevented.

"Arthritis isn't a serious condition; it's just minor aches and pains. It's best to ignore it"

Arthritis can become a major health issue if left undiagnosed and untreated. Arthritis is the number one cause of disability, limiting the activities of millions of Americans. Most of the joint damage associated with arthritis occurs within the first few years after the disease starts, therefore, early and accurate diagnosis is crucial to minimizing its effects.

"There is nothing that can be done for arthritis. You just have to learn to live with it"

There is no miracle cure or magic bullet but there are many things a person can do to relieve the pain of arthritis, reduce disability and help maintain the ability to do the things they enjoy. Research shows that early diagnosis and appropriate treatment strategies can help reduce the consequences associated with many types of arthritis. Physical activity, education, medication, and surgery are four effective treatment strategies that can make a difference.

The following can help relieve pain and improve the quality of life:

- Appropriate physical activity or exercise
 - *Arthritis Aquatic classes*

- *PACE classes (People with Arthritis Can Exercise)*
- *Other activities you enjoy, modified to your abilities (gardening, dancing, walking, yoga, T'ai Chi)*
- The Arthritis Self-Management Course- a six week course developed by the Arthritis Foundation
- Arthritis management and self-care
 - *Activity modification*
 - *Use of assistive devices*
 - *Weight loss/ weight management*
 - *Application of heat or cold*
 - *Joint protection*
 - *Distraction techniques*
 - *Medication*
 - *Alternate periods of activity with periods of rest*
 - *Meditation, prayer, relaxation techniques*
 - *Physical therapy*
 - *Occupational therapy*
 - *Surgery*